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Pre-Rational Harmony in Heidegger's Essential Thinking and Ch'an Thought

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In recent Western philosophy we find two leading thinkers who have changed their approaches to truth and adopted methods that are opposite to those they previously employed. One of these thinkers is Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose analysis of language led him to reject philosophical analysis and to devote himself to the concrete and actual, dissolving the distinction between subject and object.¹ In his study on *Wittgenstein: Language and Philosophy*, Warren Shibles makes a direct comparison between Wittgenstein's thinking and the teachings of early Chinese Ch'an masters such as Ma-tsu, Nan-ch'uan, Lin-chi, and Chao-chou. Both the Ch'an masters and Wittgenstein emphasize the limits of language and reject language which analyzes and distorts, creating differentiations between subject and object.

Another thinker who originally pursued a subjective, analytical approach and then changed this method to a more direct, poetic approach is Martin Heidegger. In 1929, when Heidegger published his famous work *Being and Time*, he himself confessed that his detailed analysis of the ontological structure of human experience had difficulty encountering Being. In his "Letter On Humanism" he comments:

The necessary...comprehension of this other way of thought—the thought that abandons subjectivity—is, however, made more difficult by the fact that at the publication of *Sein und Zeit* [*Being and Time*] the

• Ch'an: Zen in Japanese.

¹ Warren Shibles, *Wittgenstein: Language and Philosophy*. Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Book Company, 1969, p. 88.

third section of the first part, i.e., "Time and Being" was suppressed. Here, the whole thing is reversed. The section... was suppressed because the thinking failed to find language adequate to this reversal and did not succeed through the aid of the language of metaphysics.²

The reversals in the methods of thinking of Wittgenstein and Heidegger are both worthwhile to study. The present paper will concentrate on the recent approach of Heidegger and its relation to Ch'an Buddhism. Heidegger's essential thinking is also called "meditative thinking." It is the "other way of thought" referred to above. In order to discuss this "other way of thought" we may follow the comparison between Hegel's thinking and Heidegger's thinking which Heidegger himself has drawn in his *Identity and Difference*. Heidegger says that for Hegel, the "matter of thinking" is the Absolute Idea, or Reason. This Reason contains within itself the entire logical-dialectical process which unfolds in the actual world. Heidegger points out that near the end of his *Science of Logic* Hegel says: "Only the Absolute Idea is Being, imperishable Life, self-knowing Truth, and it is all Truth."³ In short, the matter of thinking for Hegel is "the developed fullness in which what has been and now is thought."⁴

For Heidegger, on the other hand, the matter of thinking is not what has already been thought, but what "has not been thought and from which what has been thought receives its essential space."⁵

Hegel's thinking has the character of the Absolute Concept. In his system, previous thinking is included into "a still higher development and systematization" which suppresses it. Thus, according to Heidegger, Hegel's thinking has the character of "elevation" which "leads to the heightening and gathering... of truth... as absolute... in the sense of the completely developed certainty of self-knowing knowledge."⁶

² Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism." In *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken, New York: Random House, 1961, pp. 279-280.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper and Row, 1957, pp. 43.

⁴ *Identity and Difference*, op. cit., p. 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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Heidegger's thinking, however, is "no longer an elevation, but the step back." This step back "points to the realm which until now has been skipped over, and from which the essence of truth becomes first of all worthy of thought."⁷ Heidegger says: "The step back does not mean an isolated step of thought but rather means the manner in which thinking moves and a long path ... Our thinking... leads us away from what has been thought so far in philosophy. Thinking... brings what is thought into a confrontation in which we behold the whole of this history—behold it with respect to what constitutes the source of the entire thinking."⁸ For Hegel, this is a traditional problem; but for Heidegger, it is "what has always remained unasked in the history of thinking."⁹

In Chinese Neo-Confucianist philosophy we encounter thinking which is similar to Hegel's rational thought. For Neo-Confucianists, thinking evolves or develops rationally. It is universal and transcendental, and is called *li*, or Principle, or Reason. *Li* is the timeless totality of all truth in the universe and is sometimes called the Ultimate, or *T'ai Chi*. In short, *li* is absolute conceptual Reason which is close to Hegel's Absolute Idea. A School of *Li* has developed in China from the twelfth century until recent times. The discovery of the reality of *li* enables man to attain to an eternal, pure, and ideal world.

In contrast to the Neo-Confucianist School of *Li*, there is the School of Ch'an in Chinese Buddhism, which stresses non-conceptual and non-analytical thinking in an intuitive approach to reality. Ch'an's thinking is neither cognitive nor abstract but is intuitive, concrete, and factual. The thinking of the School of *Li* creates the dichotomy between the knower and the known. In the School of Ch'an, the knower and the known are one. This oneness is the root which is prior to all dichotomies.

In his reply to Hu Shih's letter in *Philosophy East and West*, Daisetz T. Suzuki discusses Ch'an epistemology. He says that we can have two kinds of information about reality. The first is called "knowable knowledge" and is knowledge *about* reality. The second is called "unknowable knowledge" and is that which comes out of reality itself. Knowable knowledge involves the distinction between subject as knower and object as known. All knowledge which is based on

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹ *Ibid.*

this dichotomy is knowable because it is public and accessible to everyone. Unknowable knowledge, on the other hand, is individual knowledge which is the result of an inner experience. Yet the man who has such private knowledge is at the same time convinced of its universality. He knows that it is inherent in everybody, but everybody is just not aware of it.¹⁰

Knowable knowledge is relative knowledge. Unknowable knowledge is absolute knowledge which cannot be communicated through words or ideas. It is the knowledge one has of himself directly and immediately, without any mediation between himself and his knowledge. It is the origin of all knowledge and "is not knowledge itself."

According to Heidegger, the nature of truth always appears to metaphysics in "the derivative form of the truth of knowledge and the truth of propositions which formulate our knowledge";¹¹ truth as unconcealedness, however, may be prior to all metaphysical truth. The knowledge to which Heidegger refers is the "knowable knowledge" of Ch'an Buddhism. It is the manifestation of unconcealedness which belongs to metaphysics, but not to the origin of metaphysics. The thinking of metaphysics is what Heidegger calls representational thinking which is the traditional, logical thinking of metaphysics. It cannot reach the origin of metaphysics which is the nature of its truth. What is needed to reach this origin is a more rigorous, essential thinking which is not logical or rational but is an intuitive return to the origin of metaphysical thought. In Heidegger's words:

If our thinking should succeed in its efforts to go back into the ground of metaphysics it might well help to bring about a change in human nature, accompanied by a transformation of metaphysics.¹²

In *Identity and Difference* Heidegger's thinking is directed to a realm "which the key words of metaphysics—Being and beings, the ground and what is grounded—are no longer adequate to utter."¹³ These words refer to what differs

¹⁰ Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih." In *Philosophy East and West* (April 1953) Volume III, No. 1, p. 33.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics." In *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken, New York: Random House, 1962, p. 209.

¹² "Letter on Humanism," *op. cit.*, p. 209.

¹³ *Identity and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

between Being and beings. The origin of the difference cannot be thought within the realm of metaphysics. Here, Heidegger's thinking is "on its way" to the path into the origin of metaphysics. It achieves the step back "out of metaphysics into the active essence of metaphysics."¹⁴ The step back must yet pass through the difficulty which lies in language. For Heidegger, "Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking." What is needed to accomplish the step back are "other possibilities of utterance—and that means at the same time of a telling silence."¹⁵

Once man accomplishes the step back and "a telling silence" he will attain to his real or authentic nature which is the "higher activity" of meditative thinking. Essential thinking is the means discovered by Heidegger to achieve a "direct and immediate reference beyond man to Being."¹⁶ "Releasement toward things" and "openness to the mystery" are two essential aspects of this way of thinking. Through them, man will attain "a kind of transmutation" of himself which will enable him "to pass out of bondage to what is clear and evident...to what is ultimate, however obscure and difficult that may be."¹⁷

We can also understand Heidegger's "releasement toward things" and "openness to the mystery" in Ch'an terms. In Ch'an, releasement toward things and openness to the mystery mean "isness" or letting things be themselves; that is, letting the flower be red and the willow green. It means to shiver in the winter and to enjoy the breeze in the summer. Through such releasement, in Heidegger's words, we are "taking a stand which reveals Being;" that is, we are "indwelling" or "dwelling in Being."¹⁸ In Ch'an this means to abide in the *Tao* and to be open to the reality of things.

Prior to his recent approach of essential thinking, Heidegger tried to work out the question of Being through an analysis of the ontological structures of man's Being, i.e., the primordial whole of Dasein, in terms of the ground of temporality. For Heidegger, man is essentially historical. However, he does not con-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*. Translated by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1959, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

ceive of history in the relative sense as "the connectedness of motions of objects," nor as a "free-floating sequence of experiences" of subjects. History is more primordially interpreted as the entire "'context' of events and 'effects' which draws on through the past, present, and future."¹⁹ This seems similar to what Chuang-tzu said in his chapter on the "Identity of Contraries:" "The sage blends everything into one harmonious whole, rejecting the confusion of this and that...he contemplates ten thousand years and unifies them in perfect purity. Ten thousand things are all what they are, yet among them there is mutual solution."

The possibility of history lies in the fundamental historicity of man's Being. Historicity is the ground for the understanding of Being which is handed down to us through human history. Historicity is grounded in historicality which is the Being of man in its very basis. The "hidden basis" of authentic historicality, in turn, is authentic temporality. Thus, the primordial basis of man's historical Being-in-the-world is temporality.²⁰

For Heidegger, temporality or primordial time is not ordinary, relative time which is accessible to the ordinary understanding. Ordinary time is a "pure sequence of nows" in which the now, or present is separated from the past and the future. Primordial time, on the other hand, is the basis of authentic existence. It constitutes the unity of past, present, and future and is the source of all ordinary or "derivative" time.²¹

In Ch'an Buddhism, we also find primordial time which is not merely "contentless form" but is identified with Being itself. In Ch'an this means that time does not have a separate substance, but is identified with existence. That is, time is existence, existence is time. As Dōgen, the founder of Soto Zen in Japan in the thirteenth century says: "The time we call spring blossoms directly as an existence called flowers. The flowers, in turn, express the time called spring. This is not existence within time; existence itself is time."²²

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962, p. 430.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

²² Masunaga Reiho, *The Soto Approach to Zen*. Tokyo: Layman Buddhist Society Press, 1958. pp. 68-69.

In Ch'an, primordial time is also distinguished from ordinary or "specific" time which is expressed as "this time" or "that time." Specific time is separated into past, present, and future while primordial or "basic" time, as in Heidegger's thinking, is the unity of past, present and future. It is the source from which ordinary time arises and to which it returns.

Although we do find similarities between Heidegger's primordial time and primordial time in Ch'an, what we have said indicates that we are still in the realm of conceptualization. The thinking in Heidegger's later approach is "beyond activity and passivity" and does not conceptualize in such terms as temporality or historicity. Thus, in the "Conversation on a Country Path" Heidegger clearly states that "history...does not consist in the happenings and deeds of the world...nor in the cultural achievements of man...the historical rests in that-which-regions...it rests in what, coming to pass in man, regions him into his nature."²³ For Heidegger, "man in his very nature belongs to that-which-regions, i.e., he is released to it...Not occasionally, but—how shall we say it—prior to everything....The prior, of which we really can not think...because the nature of thinking begins there....Thus man's nature is released to that-which-regions in what is prior to thought."²⁴ Heidegger's term that-which-regions is used to indicate Being itself. In Anderson's Introduction to *Discourse on Thinking* we read: "In the Conversation...Heidegger does not use the word Being; but in order to stress the inherent openness and activity of Being, he uses the word region and its cognates instead."²⁵ Further, he comments: "Since that-which-regions is a regioning, a movement, we can understand man's nature as brought forth in this movement. That-which-regions is a dynamic ground in which man's nature emerges."²⁶ This nature which belongs to that-which-regions "in what is prior to thought" in Ch'an would be called man's original nature²⁷ or Buddha nature²⁸ which is free from the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity and is the origin of all differentiations.

²³ *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

²⁵ *Discourse on Thinking*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁷ Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (Second Series). London, Rider and Company, 1958, p. 203.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger discusses the traditional differentiation between Being as object, and thinking as subject. What Heidegger seeks to understand is "the origin of the differentiation"²⁹ in which the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity is abandoned. For Heidegger, Being and thinking are "one and the same." The unity that is meant in this "self-sameness" is "the unity of the belonging together of antagonisms. This is original Oneness."³⁰

Being and thinking thought together in this way in Ch'an Buddhism is *1 nien*, or one-thought. It is the thought that "abandons subjectivity" and is called the "mind of no-mind." It is thinking that is free from objective limitations as well as from subjective orientations and distortions. One-thought viewing signifies our inner awareness of ultimate reality, and not knowledge that is intellectually acquired. Through it, we break loose from the bonds of relative knowledge and are able to view things in one-thought.³¹ Thus, we see that Heidegger's thinking is similar to the one-thought viewing of Ch'an. Through one-thought viewing or essential thinking, in Heidegger's thought, man's essential nature is revealed.

According to Heidegger the nature of essential or meditative thinking is man's "in-dwelling releasement to that-which-regions;" that is, man's opening to Being itself. "That-which-regions regions all, gathering everything together and letting everything return to itself, to rest in its own identity."³² It is "the nearness of distance, and the distance of nearness."³³ In his "Conversation on a Country Path" Heidegger expresses the experience of thinking during the "Conversation" as "coming near to and so at the same time remaining distant from that-which-regions." Or, as he says: "Releasement lies...beyond the distinction between activity and passivity."³⁴ It is a "higher activity of thinking" which is beyond relative distinctions. "Higher acting is yet no activity" according to both Heidegger and Ch'an. Affirmation simultaneously followed by

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, 1953, p. 122.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³¹ Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (First Series), New York: Harper and Row, 1949, p. 123.

³² "Conversation on a Country Path," *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

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immediate negation is the approach of *chen-kung miao-yu*, or real void and subtle reality. According to Ch'an, "when we say that something is real, it is not a relative reality. When we say that it is void, it is not a relative void. What is real is void; what is void, is real. This identification of the void and the real is achieved by the absolute mind, which is free of all dichotomy. It is the emergence of constant consciousness which is conscious of itself. And yet it is not different from the ordinary mind."³⁵ The emergence of this consciousness may be identified with Heidegger's conception of *Lichtung*, or clearing and lighting.³⁶

Ch'an Buddhists define this mind of consciousness which is free from subjectivity as "neither Being nor Non-being and simultaneously neither not-Being nor not Non-being." This mind is achieved by the refined approach of the San-lun School (the Chinese Madhyamika School) called the Double Truth on Three Levels. On the third level the higher truth is both not Being and not Non-being and neither not Being nor not Non-being. At this level, one of the earliest Ch'an Buddhists says: "Not only are the means of expression destroyed, but the roots of mental activity itself are cut out." This is what Ch'an Buddhists call the mind of no-mind which is free from the bondage of subjectivity. Although these three levels form a refined dialectic, their purpose, according to the San-lun School, is to free the mind from logical bondage. I wonder whether this logical approach which is yet free from logic would be acceptable to Heidegger, who says: "That-which-regions is the nearness of distance and the distance of nearness...a characterization which should not be thought of dialectically."³⁷

Both Heidegger's meditative thinking and one-thought viewing in Ch'an indicate man's ontological experience. That is, through such thinking man experiences his own true nature which is identified with the truth of Being itself. For Heidegger and for Ch'an ontological experience is identified with aesthetic feeling. As Heidegger says: "Art is one way in which truth happens."³⁸ In

³⁵ Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teaching of Ch'an Buddhism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969, p. 13.

³⁶ *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

³⁷ "Conversation on a Country Path," *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*. Edited by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, New York: The Modern Library, 1964, p. 647.

Ch'an, ontological experience is identified with the highest aesthetic achievement. Thus, what we have said concerning Heidegger's "openness to the mystery" and "releasement toward things" may be concretely exemplified through a comparison of the basic aesthetic principles of Heidegger and Ch'an.

As we know, Kant's great step is to identify the realm of aesthetics as a domain of human experience which is as high as the cognitive and the moral. The three realms distinguished by Kant, i.e., nature, morality, and art, are each governed by their own a priori principle: nature by the principle of conformity to law, morality by the principle of final purpose, and art by the principle of purposiveness. Kant maintains that there is a fundamental ground of unity between the realms of nature and morality which makes possible the transition from ordinary understanding to higher moral reason. The idea of this ground of unity is contained within the aesthetic principle of purposiveness. According to this principle, the aesthetic judgment forms the mediating link between morality and nature.³⁹

It follows that the beautiful, as the object of the aesthetic judgment, is a symbol of the morally good. The sensible element in beautiful art is always in harmony and conformity with the moral ideas. Thus, as Croce says: The teleological judgment in Kant's philosophy is "the basis and condition for the aesthetic."⁴⁰ That is, at the basis of the form of beauty there is a logical concept of purpose. The beautiful is merely an ornament through which to express the logical concept. Thus, for Kant, aesthetical perfection is not as high as logical perfection.

Kant divides the world into the realms of sensible appearance and supersensible reality, or things-in-themselves. Human, finite knowledge and experience are limited to the sensible realm. Man cannot know or experience the transcendental things-in-themselves, but can only think them in the transcendental ideas of reason. Kant's aesthetics belongs to the sensible world of appearances, and cannot attain to transcendental reality. Thus, as Croce says:

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by J. H. Bernard, New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966, p. xxxii.

⁴⁰ Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*. Translated by Douglas Ainslie, New York: The Noonday Press, 1968, p. 274.

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He [Kant] finds no place for imagination amongst powers of the spirit, but places it among the facts of sensation. He knows a reproductive imagination and an associative, but he knows nothing of a genuinely productive imagination...⁴¹

Hegel went beyond Kant in his conception of a mental imagination which is both imagination and intellect. This mental imagination is capable of attaining to the highest Idea or reality, while for Kant, imagination is merely sensible and therefore limited to the appearances of the sensible world. For Hegel, as Croce comments:

Artistic imagination does not work in the same way as the passive or receptive fancy, it does not stop at the appearances of sensible reality but searches for the internal truth and rationality of the real.⁴²

For Kant, art and beauty cannot be identified with the ultimate or absolute. Aesthetics is merely a symbol of morality or the sensible illustration of super-sensible ideas. For Hegel, art and beauty are raised to the level of the Absolute. Beauty and truth are one and the same. Truth is the Idea as Idea; beauty is the Idea in its appearance. In art, the sensible form and the spiritual content interpenetrate and form a unified whole. As Hegel says: "An ideal content must gleam through the sensible form; the form is spiritualized by this ideal light."⁴³ Thus, "no successful work of art can issue from light and careless imagination."⁴⁴

Hegel places art in the realm of the Absolute Spirit. This is perhaps the greatest merit of his philosophy, but it also brought him to difficulty. Art is merely a transitory phase in the developing and self-unfolding of the Absolute. In Hegel's words:

We have assigned...a very high place to art: but...neither in content nor in form can art be considered the most perfect means of bringing before the consciousness of the mind its true interests. Precisely by

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

reason of its form, art is limited to a particular content. Only a definite...grade of truth can be made visible in a work of art; that is to say, such truth as may be transfused into the sensible and adequately presented in that form, as were the Greek gods.⁴⁵

For Hegel, art is the earliest and lowest phase in the self-unfolding of the Absolute Idea, and can never reach as high as philosophy. Philosophy is able to express a deeper truth than art. Thus, Hegel maintains:

Thought and reflexion have superseded fine art...Art in its highest form is...a thing of the past.⁴⁶

The difficulties of aesthetic achievement encountered in Hegel's system are eliminated in Heidegger's thought. Hegel wanted to identify beauty and truth, but he made beauty a lower form of truth. For Heidegger, however, beauty and truth are perfectly identified. Indeed, art is "an origin of the establishment of truth."⁴⁷ The art to which Heidegger refers is the origin of art. The truth of this art is not merely the truth of a particular thing, but a revelation of the being of all that is.

Heidegger's identification of beauty and truth is quite close to the identification of aesthetic feeling and ontological experience in Ch'an. To identify aesthetic feeling and ontological experience is a basic contribution of Ch'an art, and may be expressed in the saying: "Heaven and Earth and I share the same root; ten thousand things and I belong to one body." When nature, or spirit and man are identified, the difficulties of the dichotomy of art and spirit are resolved.

In his essay on "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger says that when we stand before a great painting, such as Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes, the painting speaks to us. "In the vicinity of the work we are suddenly somewhere other than we are accustomed to be."⁴⁸ We are removed from our usual condition and enter into the truth that is disclosed by the work, thus bringing our own essence to a stand in the truth of what is. The "somewhere other" to which Heidegger refers is close to what Laurence Binyon, a critic of Asian art,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ "The Origin of the Work of Art," *op. cit.*, p. 647.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

calls the "rarer atmosphere" into which he was drawn while gazing at an ancient Chinese landscape painting. For Heidegger, Van Gogh's painting reveals the truth of the peasant shoes. The shoes emerge into the unconcealment of their being. The truth of the work of art happens as the "primal conflict" between lighting and concealing.⁴⁹ The essence of truth is in this "conflict" in which the "Open" is achieved, in which the truth of what is is revealed.⁵⁰ Thus, the art work is the "conflict" in which the unconcealment of what is takes place, and the truth of things is revealed.

For Heidegger, the thinking which is involved in the work of art enables us to "turn toward the entity, think upon it in itself in regard to its being, but...at the same time let it rest upon itself in its essence."⁵¹ This is the essential thinking which is expressed in Heidegger's poem "From the Experience of Thinking," in which we read:

The poetic character of thinking is still veiled; where it shows itself,
it resembles for a long time the utopia of a serene, poetic mind.
But the thoughtful thinking is in reality the topology of being.⁵²

The unconcealment of the truth of things in meditative thinking reveals the origin of art. This origin may be the meeting point between Heidegger's essential thinking and Ch'an thought. Based upon this meeting point, let us examine how "essential thinking" takes place in Ch'an art. First, let us hear what the famous Chinese painter Ch'i Pe-shih has to say.

According to Ch'i Pe-shih, his method of painting proceeds in such a way that it is between similarity and dissimilarity. If his painting were entirely similar to the ordinary object, he said, it would be vulgar. If it were entirely different, it would be cheating the world. In terms of the self-identity of opposites which we have found in both Heidegger and Ch'an, Ch'i Pe-shih's painting is free from the opposites of actuality and non-actuality. This absolute freedom of the mind in producing great art is a basic contribution of Ch'an philosophy.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 680.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 684.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 661.

⁵² Martin Heidegger, "*Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*." A pamphlet published in twelve poems, 1965.

This process of creativity in art may be illustrated in the following Ch'an poem:

The wild geese fly across the long sky above.
Their image is reflected in the chilly water below.
The geese do not mean to cast their image on the water.
Nor does the water mean to hold the image of the geese.

This poem indicates that aesthetic feeling and ontological experience are identified as one. This identity takes place in the absolute moment which cannot be conceived as ordinary time. It is primordial time which creates a great work of art. In the absolute moment the mind of the artist is free from limitations and distortions. It is that which is beyond all opposites and diversities. In the Chinese expression, this is Absolute Oneness which is called *wu*, or Non-being, or Nothing in Heidegger's sense. When this Oneness or Non-being takes place in the mind, it is one-thought viewing. From one-thought viewing, ten thousand things are produced. For Heidegger, through meditative thinking man opens to the being of all that is. In Chuang-tzu we read:

There is an ultimate reality in things. Things in their ultimate reality are curved without the help of arcs, straight without lines, round without compasses, and rectangular without right angles...In this manner all things create themselves from their own inward reflection and none can tell how they come to do so.⁵³

When inner reflection takes place, the process of manifesting ultimate reality is fulfilled. In this direct, immediate, and spontaneous process, we find the curve simply reflecting its curve and the line its straightness. It is as the wild geese casting their images upon the water without intention. This spontaneous, direct, reflection indicates the absolute moment in which aesthetic feeling and ontological experience are identified. This absolute moment leads to self-realization of the highest affirmation of Non-being, or Nothing.

From what we have discussed above, we may now come to the fundamental question of the meaning of Non-being, or Nothing which may be the chief contribution of Buddhist philosophy, particularly with respect to Ch'an in this paper. In "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" Heidegger asks:

⁵³ *Creativity and Taoism*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

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"Why is there any Being at all and not rather Nothing?" He does not give an immediate answer, but inquires further: "How did it come about that things take precedence everywhere and lay claim to every 'is' while that which is not is understood as Nothing, though it is Being itself, and remains forgotten?"⁵⁴ For Heidegger, "Being and Nothing hang together."⁵⁵ Heidegger defines Being as: "This, the purely 'Other' than everything that 'is,' is that-which-is-not...yet this Nothing functions as Being."⁵⁶ What, then, is this Nothing in Heidegger's thinking? Perhaps we may better understand it by comparing it with the Nothing as described in Ch'an.

Firstly, Heidegger's Nothing is not a purely negative Nothing. In "What Is Metaphysics?" Heidegger asks:

Does Nothing exist only because the not, i.e., negation exists? Or is it the other way about? Does negation and the not exist only because Nothing exists?...We assert: Nothing is more original than the not and negation.⁵⁷

For Heidegger, then, Nothing is the source of negation, not the other way about.

Ch'an's Nothing is also not merely negation. In Suzuki we read:

If we want to get to the truth of things, we must see them from the point where...the consciousness of this and that has not yet been awakened and where the mind is absorbed in its...serenity and emptiness. This is a world of negations, but leading to a higher or absolute affirmation—an affirmation in the midst of negations.⁵⁸

This higher affirmation is the origin of negation and is prior to all processes of reason. Therefore, "when Zen denies, it is not necessarily a denial in the logical

⁵⁴ "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?" In *Existence and Being*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1967, p. 346.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁵⁸ Daisetz T. Suzuki, *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1962, p. 33.

sense. The same can be said of an affirmation."⁵⁹ What Suzuki refers to as "higher affirmation" may be close to Heidegger's "more original" Nothing which is neither the not nor negation.

Secondly, Nothing in Heidegger's thinking is not "imaginary Nothing." When we seek the Nothing, he says, "we can think of the whole of what is... and then negate what we have thus imagined. In this way we arrive at...imaginary Nothing, but never Nothing itself."⁶⁰

Nothingness in Ch'an is also not imagined Nothingness. Nothing is not a passive contemplation or imagination; rather Nothing is beyond activity and passivity. That is, in Nothing activity and passivity are one. In Suzuki we read: "When the Zen experience...is brought to conceptualization, it is no more the experience itself; it turns into something else."⁶¹ That is why the Nothing is revealed in daily activities, whether picking tea leaves, or sweeping the floor, or hoeing the fields. This Nothing is not imagination, but is concrete, living activities. In the Ch'an expression: "Carrying water, chopping wood; therein is the *Tao*."

In a more positive sense, Nothing for Heidegger may be considered the basis and potentiality of creativity. As he says: "Nothing is that which makes the revelation of what-is as such possible for our human existence."⁶² Further we read in his "Memorial Address."⁶³

If releasement toward things and openness to the mystery awaken within us, then we should arrive at a path that will lead to a new ground and foundation. In that ground, the creativity which produces lasting works could strike new roots.

This "new ground" in Heidegger's thinking may be illustrated by the Ch'an analogy of water and waves. From the ordinary point of view, creation is represented by the waves, and the water is neglected. From the Buddhist point of view, the real creator is the water itself, which is one with the waves. We see

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶⁰ "What Is Metaphysics?" *op. cit.*, pp. 332-333.

⁶¹ Suzuki, "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih," *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁶² "What Is Metaphysics?" *op. cit.*, p. 340.

⁶³ "Memorial Address." In *Discourse On Thinking*, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

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the increasing and decreasing of a thousand waves and think that it is the real process of creation. We neglect that within the thousand waves there is the water, which is the real creator. The water never increases or decreases, nor comes into being or disappears. This water, according to Ch'an Buddhism, is the mind of no-mind, or the form of formless.

Not long ago, Nishida Kitaro of Kyoto, the leading philosopher in modern Japan, wrote:

In contradistinction to Western culture, which considers form as existence and formation as good, the urge to see the form of the formless, and to hear the sound of the soundless lies at the very foundation of Eastern culture.⁶⁴

Perhaps if Nishida had read the "Conversation on a Country Path" he would have recognized this same "urge to see the form of the formless" in Heidegger's search for the nature of essential thinking. What Heidegger discovers in essential thinking is releasement, within which "a higher acting is concealed...than is found in all the actions within the world."⁶⁵ This "higher acting is yet no activity" and is the nature of essential thinking or the "mind of no-mind" in Ch'an. In both Heidegger's essential thinking and the mind of no-mind in Ch'an, man achieves the "step back" into his origins and awakens to his true self.

In our comparative analysis we have seen that the basic elements of Heidegger's essential thinking and Ch'an thought are coming towards each other. As William Barrett says in his Introduction to Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism*:

Certainly Heidegger's philosophy in its tone and temper and sources is Western to its core, and there is much in him that is not in Zen, but also very much more in Zen that is not in Heidegger; and yet the points of correspondence between the two...are startling enough.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Nishida Kitaro, *A Study of Good*. Translated by V. H. Viglielmo, Japan: Printing Bureau, Japanese Government, 1960, p. 211.

⁶⁵ "Conversation on a Country Path," *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁶⁶ William Barrett, Introduction to *Zen Buddhism* by Daisetz T. Suzuki. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956, p. xi.

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If my study is not incorrect, we might say that Heidegger's recent approach of essential or meditative thinking may serve as one of the bridges that will bring the philosophies of the East and the West together.